

481. Customs of propriety. A native of the Naga Hills told an English-man that it was not the correct thing to use a poisoned arrow except to shoot it at a woman.¹ On the Palau Islands, and amongst all Moslems,² it is an insult to a man to ask him about the health of his wife, and any man may strike with a stick or a stone, not with a cutting weapon, anyone who utters the former's wife's name. Women are treated with extreme formality. A man who surprises one bathing is fined. This occurs very rarely, since the men utter cries of warning when approaching the place.⁸ In German Melanesia a visitor is at once presented with betel and food, but he immediately gives some of it back to the inmates of the house as security against poison.⁴ The Indians of Central America are shocked at the quick actions and loud talking habitual to Europeans, and think them signs of a lack of breeding and of the low level of European culture. Some tribes allow no singing, which they consider a sign of drunkenness.⁵ An Ossetin (Caucasus) will never take his child on his arm or caress it in the presence of another, especially of an older person, or his own father or mother. If he did do so, no one would shake hands with him, and any one might with impunity spit in his face. Propriety forbids the Tushins (of the same region) to manifest tenderness, even when old, towards husband or wife, parent or child, in the presence of others; especially is it improper to show tenderness towards sons.⁶ An Ossetin man may see his betrothed only in secret and incidentally, or in the house of one of his own relatives. It

is a gross insult to ask him about her health, or when the wedding will be. A married woman may not address her husband or male relatives by their names. If she does so, the other women will ridicule her. Other people in the same region have similar excessive rules.

An Armenian woman, after marriage, is veiled. She must not talk with any one but her husband, sisters, or little children. She answers her parents-in-law by signs. Her husband ought not to call her by her name before others.

A Cherkess wife may talk with her husband only at night. His presence in her room by day is thought improper, and it is improper for man and wife to be seen together outside the house, or to be seen talking together.

A newly married woman, among the Grusians, must not speak to her husband's father, mother, or brothers until she has borne a child. A childless wife is not treated with respect by her husband, or his family, or even by outsiders.⁷

Darinsky explains that the community used to buy the wives, who were costly, and not equal in number to the men. Now, if a man gets a wife and children of his own, he commits a crime against the old order. He must be well off, and he leaves his poorer brethren in the lurch. They envy and annoy him.

To escape this he conceals or ignores his relation to his wife and children.

¹ JAI, XI, 199. 2

Pischon, *Einfluss des Islam*, 17.

³ Kubary, *Soc. Einrichtungen der Pelauer*, 73, go.

⁴ Pfeil, *Aus der Südsee*, 48, 74. *
Globus, LXXXVII, 129, 130.

⁶ Darinsky in *Ztsft. für vergleich. Rechtswissnsft.*, XIV, 189.

⁷ *Russ. Ethnog. (russ.)*, 219, 225, 291, 340, 355, 358.